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New Gaelic Speakers, New Gaels?

Ideologies and ethnolinguistic continuity in contemporary Scotland

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Introduction: Theoretical approaches to language revitalisation and bilingual education

Gaelic-medium education (henceforward ‘GME’) occupies an increasingly prominent position in contemporary language policy in Scotland. The system – whereby the majority of classroom instruction is delivered through Gaelic – is regarded by policy-makers as one of the principal mechanisms for the generation of new Gaelic speakers, who (it is hoped) will subsequently take the language forward as an important aspect of their adolescent and adult lives. Nevertheless, a variety of leading scholars have theorised on the basis of research from the international context that the potential impact of (bilingual) education on language revitalisation initiatives may be undermined by a complex array of linguistic and psychological factors.¹ The late Joshua Fishman, for instance, stated famously that minoritised languages at which RLS (‘reversing language shift’) efforts are directed require spaces for their informal use in the home-community sphere ‘*before* school begins, outside of school, during the years of schooling and afterwards, when formal schooling is over and done with’ (Fishman, 2001b, p. 471). Romaine (2000, p. 54) has stated that it is ‘[the] inability of minorities to maintain the home as an intact domain for the use of their language’ that has often proved a fundamental (and deciding) factor in instances of language shift.

Similarly, Nettle and Romaine (2000, p. 189) highlight that securing intergenerational transmission in the *home* is often regarded as the most crucial goal of language maintenance, rather than persuading policy-makers and governments to act on behalf of the threatened language in domains such as that of public education. These observations parallel Fishman’s emphasis on the difficult task of securing the minoritised variety as the language of the home – and the failure to do so contributing in large part to the failure of language revitalisation initiatives generally (Fishman, 1991, p. 406). However, Fishman’s (1991, 2001a, b, 2013) RLS model and his recommendations on behalf of threatened minority languages also rest to a large degree upon a conception of language and ethnic

identity which many contemporary sociolinguists would regard as problematic. In particular, the (theoretical and practical) feasibility of his emphasis on the straightforward relationship of the minority language ('Xish') to its traditionally defined, ethnolinguistic speaker community ('Xmen/Xians') has been questioned at length by various authors (see Edwards, 1984b, 2009, 2010a; Heller, 2006, 2010; Jaffe, 2007a, b; Romaine, 2006). Jaffe (2007a, p. 58), for instance, has critiqued essentialist interpretations of the language-identity nexus, in which 'both "language" and "identity" and their iconic relationships are seen as fixed, ascribed/natural and unproblematic'. Whilst his theoretical stance vis-à-vis the importance of the home context to intergenerational transmission remains influential (though is by no means unquestioned) in the contemporary literature of language revitalisation, Fishman's ideas do draw to a large extent on such an unproblematic, iconic conception of language and identity. Fishman's (1991, p. 394) model rests largely, in his own words, on the 'premises that Xmen are not Ymen and that Xish culture [...] is not Yish culture'. He states, furthermore, that 'ideological clarification' of these fundamental premises 'must not be skipped over' if RLS initiatives are to succeed (Fishman, 1991, p. 394).

The foregoing considerations lead us inevitably to a discussion of language ideologies, particularly in relation to their salience in the development of ethnolinguistic identities. In an early deployment of the term *linguistic* ideologies (more frequently language ideologies in subsequent works), Michael Silverstein (1979, p. 193) defines these as the 'sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure or use'. Building on work in the field of linguistic anthropology that has proliferated since the early 1990s, Boudreau and Dubois (2007, p. 104) offer the following:

Language ideologies are usually defined as a set of beliefs on language or a particular language shared by members of a community [...] These beliefs come to be so well established that their origin is often forgotten by speakers, and are therefore socially reproduced and end up being 'naturalized', or perceived as natural or as common sense, thereby masking the social construction processes at work.

It is the systematicity of language ideologies as cultural products, and their reproduction within social context, that is of greatest relevance here. In recent years increasing numbers of linguistic anthropologists have observed that beliefs of this kind are often advanced in speakers' discourse as attempted rationalisations for their language practices, which may

in turn reinforce those practices (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004; Kroskrity, 2000, 2004; Makihara, 2010; Cavanaugh, 2013). In particular, research on language ideologies has often addressed the relationship of speakers' linguistic practices and perceptions to their sociocultural identities. For instance, Valdés et al. (2008, p. 107) view ideologies of language specifically as socially mediated processes that 'enact ties of language to identity', whilst García (2009) has noted that the perception that such ties necessarily exist between the two is a language ideology in its own right. Crucially, linguists and anthropologists have theorised that language ideologies can have an important influence on the ways in which bilingual speakers in minority language settings identify and engage with the linguistic varieties that are available to them (Fishman, 1991, 2001a, b, 2013; Boudreau and Dubois, 2007; Makihara, 2010; Cavanaugh, 2013). Such considerations regarding the role of language ideologies and cultural identity in speakers' linguistic practices are central to the analysis I present below.

Research context: GME and Gaelic in 21st century Scotland

My recent PhD research examined language use and ideologies among a purposive sample of 130 adults who started in GME during the first years of its availability in Scotland (Dunmore, 2015). Crucially, the majority of participants' Gaelic use today is limited, although notable exceptions were found among some speakers who were substantially socialised in the language at home during childhood. Additionally, only four of the 46 interviewees who participated in my research may be described as 'new speakers' of Gaelic, having been raised without Gaelic at home and acquiring the language in GME, but continuing to make frequent use of it outside of traditional 'heartland' areas in the present day (see McLeod et al., 2014). The significance of this finding is brought into sharp relief when we consider the importance attached to GME by policy-makers as a means of generating new Gaelic speakers, and of maintaining and revitalising Gaelic as a spoken vernacular in Scotland.

The 2011 UK census showed a 2.2 percent decline in the number of people claiming an ability to speak Gaelic in Scotland compared to the 2001 census. This constituted a sharp diminution in the rate of decline from ten years previously, when the equivalent loss was 11.1 percent from the 1991 figure. In total 57,602 people over the age of three reported

being able to speak Gaelic in 2011, approximating to 1.1 percent of the total population of Scotland (NROS, 2013). In spite of this, the census also showed growth, for the first time, in the proportion of Gaelic speakers under the age of 20. Although the rate of this growth was just 0.1 percent compared to the percentage of speakers recorded for this age-group in 2001, a great deal was made of its importance in demonstrating the growth of GME in Scotland. The then chief executive of Bòrd na Gàidhlig – the statutory agency charged with the promotion of Gaelic – stated of the figures that:

the number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland has almost stabilised since the census of 2001. This is mainly due to the rise in Gaelic-medium education [...] and] shows that within the next ten years the long term decline of the language could be reversed (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2014).

The significance attached to the development of GME as a key priority for strategic policy objectives is similarly emphasised in the following extract, from the Scottish Government's (2014) consultation paper on a Gaelic education bill. The principals of this paper were subsequently integrated within its proposals regarding Gaelic in the Education (Scotland) Bill, which was introduced in the Scottish Parliament in March 2015:

The Scottish Government's aim is to create a secure future for Gaelic in Scotland. This will only be achieved by an increase in the numbers of those learning, speaking and using the language. Gaelic medium [*sic*] education can make an important contribution to this, both in terms of young people's language learning but also in terms of the effects this can have on language use in home, community and work (Scottish Government, 2014, p.3).

Contemporary policy statements of this kind therefore indicate the degree to which policy-makers view GME as a mechanism by which not only to increase rates of Gaelic language acquisition in school, but also as a means to socialise children into patterns of language use that they will later carry forward into the domains of home and work (see The National Gaelic Language Plan, 2012–17; Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2012). In essence, the intention is that GME will substantially increase the numbers of new speakers of Gaelic in Scotland, by equipping students to use the language to a considerable degree throughout their adolescent and adult lives. Yet very little empirical evidence has previously been available on whether GME indeed does impact on past students' linguistic practices in this way. Indeed, while various scholars have observed that the impact of immersion education in other contexts of language revitalisation appears to be limited, research on the long-term outcomes of bilingual programmes is notable by its scarcity. However, micro-level analyses in Wales

(Hodges, 2009), Ireland (Murtagh, 2007) and Catalonia (Woolard, 2011) have offered revealing conclusions in this regard. Whilst use of Welsh and Irish by past immersion students in those contexts was found to be relatively limited in Murtagh (2003) and Hodges's (2009) studies, Catalan language use by past immersion students in Woolard's (2011) research was notably greater, likely reflecting that language's divergent sociolinguistic setting (see Pujolar and González, 2013).

On the basis of various meta-analyses of the effectiveness of French immersion education in Canada (see Harley, 1994; MacFarlane and Wesche, 1995; Johnstone, 2001), Edwards (2010b, p. 261) notes that in spite of their greater command in the target language, immersion pupils generally appear not to seek out opportunities to use their second language to a greater extent than, for instance, students studying it as a subject. As Baker (2011, p. 265) phrases it, there is always a chance that '[p]otential does not necessarily lead to production; skill does not ensure street speech' (see Fishman, 1991, 2001a). Although it is the hope and intention of many that bilingual education systems will equip children to lead a bilingual life after school, this has not hitherto been clearly demonstrated. As a response to this apparent lacuna in the literature, the principal research objectives of my doctoral investigation sought to address the following questions, each of which are also central to the analysis of new speaker practices and ideologies I present below: What role does Gaelic play in the day-to-day lives of former Gaelic-medium students, who started in GME during the first decade of its availability; how and when do they use the language? What sets of language ideologies do these Gaelic-medium educated adults express in relation to Gaelic? How do these ideologies relate to their actual language practices, to their attitudes concerning the language, and to future prospects for the maintenance of Gaelic?

In the remainder of this paper I would like to draw attention to some of the language ideologies these four speakers convey when describing their current identifications with Gaelic. I argue that whilst the language clearly plays an important role in their daily and particularly their professional lives, the ideologies that they express seem to militate against their association with the traditionally defined, ethnolinguistic Gaelic community. In particular, I will draw attention to new speakers' negative perceptions and lack of

association with the term ‘Gael(s)’, in their expression of language ideologies and identities.

Method

Whilst the limitations of bilingual education in revitalising minority languages without adequate support in the home domain are widely understood, empirical evidence concerning the long-term (socio)linguistic trajectories of minority language educated adults is notable by its scarcity internationally. Valuable case-study research on the linguistic outcomes of Irish- (Murtagh, 2003), Welsh- (Hodges, 2009), and Catalan-medium education (Woolard, 2011) is somewhat limited in terms of its generalisability, as each of the authors cited here readily acknowledge. My own investigation of language use, ideologies and attitudes among a sample of 130 Gaelic-medium educated adults makes no claims of representativeness within the context of GME in Scotland. Rather, its generalisability among the relatively small cohort who started within the system during the first 10-15 years of its availability in Scotland allows for further in-depth scrutiny of the sociological, ideological and (socio)linguistic profiles of speakers in that context.

The interview corpus upon which I draw for the following analysis was collected over twelve months for my doctoral research (Dunmore, 2015). As part of this research, I conducted interviews with 46 adults who started in GME during the first years of the system’s availability, and who had responded to requests for research participants in both print and social media. 28 of these 46 interviewees also completed an online questionnaire on language use. Of these 46 speakers, 31 were female and 15 male; 17 were raised in the urban Lowlands of Scotland, 12 in the Highlands, and 17 on islands off the western seaboard, known collectively (if ahistorically) as the Hebrides. My analysis revealed that Gaelic use by this group was generally somewhat limited; overall, I identified ten ‘high users’ of the language among interviewees, that is to say speakers who reported speaking the language frequently in the course of their day-to-day lives at present. Of these ten, just four can be described as ‘new speakers’ of Gaelic, having grown up without the language at home, and having acquired it principally through Gaelic-medium education.

The four new speakers I discuss below are identified by the pseudonyms Graeme, Alasdair, Ceit and Euan. Graeme and Euan were both raised in urban settings with very

little Gaelic spoken either at home or in the wider community, while Alasdair and Ceit both reported growing up communities in the Highlands and Islands where Gaelic was still a significant part of local life in the late 1980s. All were aged between 25 and 30 at the time interviews were conducted. In a sense, these four individuals are ‘outliers’ compared to the broad picture of limited day-to-day Gaelic language use among the majority of participants, especially those not substantially socialised in Gaelic by their parents in childhood. These four new speakers each use a substantial amount of Gaelic in their working lives, although their domestic and social use of the language outside of work varies, as I shall discuss in the following analysis. Similarly, their identifications with the Gaelic language as an aspect of their social, cultural and ethnic identities varied widely, but were never described in terms analogous to the ‘Xians-with-Xish’ ideal emphasised in Fishman’s (1991, 2001b) theoretical formulations.

The extracts I use in the following analysis are taken from interviews which were conducted face-to-face with informants in locations convenient to them (either their home, workplace or in a nearby café). The analytical conventions applied to the dataset as a whole are based principally on Dell Hymes’s (1974) *Ethnography of Speaking* framework, and pay close attention to both the form and content of speech acts as they unfold in interviews. As such, both pragmatic and semantic considerations were central to the qualitative analysis I conducted, with transcription conventions adapted from Eleanor Ochs’s (1979) ‘transcription as theory’ typology for use within the *Ethnography of Speaking* methodology.

Gàidheil ùra - ‘New Gaels’?

It is appropriate at this point to unpack the chapter title somewhat, and to explicate the phrase ‘New Gaels’. The specific semantics of this phrase (and that of its Gaelic counterpart ‘*Gàidheil ùra*’) is not identical to that of the culturally more neutral ‘new Gaelic speaker’, the former entailing a sense of identification with the traditional speaker community (whom in simplistic terms may be termed ‘*na Gàidheil*’—the Gaels) in a way that may not be true of the latter. In the first interview extract I address below, however, Iseabail² – a high user but not a new speaker of Gaelic (having been raised by Gaelic-speaking parents at home) – explains what she sees as a key semantic distinction between the identity category of the ‘Gael’ and that of the ‘new Gael’.

EXTRACT 1.1

1. **Iseabail:** [T]ha Gàidheil ùra ann agus tha iad fhèin air uh uh (.) an abairt sin a cho-bhualadh mar gum biodh [...] chan urrainn dha Ghearmailtich a bhith Gàidhealach [[na mo bheachdsa]
There are new Gaels and they've uh uh (.) adopted that expression for themselves as it were [...] [for example] Germans can't be Gaelic [[in my opinion]
2. **SD:** [[Nach urrainn? Uh huh]
[[Can't they? Uh huh]
3. **I:** Na mo bheachdsa
In my opinion
4. **SD:** Dè mu dheidhinn Gàidheil ùra?
What about new Gaels?
5. **I:** Tha mi smaointinn Gàidheil ùra- faodaidh iad a bhith nan Gàidheil ùra gun teagamh sam bith [...] tha Gàidhlig aca ach tha mi smaointinn- tha iad air (.) Gàidhlig ùr a chruthachadh agus aithne ùr a chruthachadh [...] tha mi a' smaointinn gur e deagh rud a th' anns an abairt 'Gàidheil ùra' airson eh tha mi smaointinn g'eil- g'eil sin a' toirt em roghainn eile air fèin-aithne
I think new Gaels- they can be new Gaels absolutely [...] they speak Gaelic but I think- they've created a new Gaelic and a new identity [...] I think the phrase 'new Gaels' is a good thing because eh I think it- it gives erm another option in terms of identity

In this extract Iseabail explains her view that new Gaelic speakers from such a divergent ethnolinguistic background to the traditional speaker community as, for example, Germans cannot ever really 'be' Gaelic, in the traditional sense of the word Gael (turn 1). On the other hand, such speakers can to her mind become 'new Gaels' (*Gàidheil ùra*), a group who, she states, have adopted that term for themselves (turn 5). Just as they have constructed a new kind of Gaelic, Iseabail explains in turn 5, so too have they constructed a new identity in the language. She therefore regards the development of the term 'new Gael', and of the new identity category it indexes as entirely positive. Yet, crucially, her description of the term is offered in overtly etic terms, from the perspective of a native rather than a new speaker.

As I hope to demonstrate in the following extracts, the four new speakers in my interview corpus tended, by contrast, not to view either 'Gael' or 'new Gael' as a social category that unproblematically indexed their own identifications with the language, and more emic perspectives on the question of new speakers' identities provide a rather

different outlook on the social meaning of the ‘Gael’. Firstly in extract 2, below, Graeme, a postgraduate student of Gaelic at a Lowland university who makes frequent and extensive use of the language in his professional and personal life conveys a certain sense of discomfort when discussing his reaction to the term ‘new Gael’.

EXTRACT 1.2

Graeme: [T]ha fhios’am gu bheil cuid dhe Ghàidheil a’ cleachdadh ‘Gàidheal ùr’ no rud mar sin orm fhìn is sin a’ crochadh air na tha iad (a’ ciallachadh) ach chan e [...] tha e ceart gu leòr ma tha thu a’ faireachdainn fhèin mar Ghàidheal ùr ach air an làimh eile chan eil mi (airson) a bhith nam sheann- Ghàidheal! Ach... ((laughs))

I know that some Gaels call me a ‘new Gael’ or something like that and it depends what they (mean) but I’m not [...] it’s fair enough if you feel like a new Gael yourself but on the other hand I don’t (want) to be an old Gael! But... ((laughs))

Graeme therefore clearly states his rejection of the label ‘new Gael’ when applied by certain other Gaelic speakers to himself, noting that it might be okay for those who themselves identify with that term to use it. Playing on the semantics of the phrase, he jokes that on the other hand he doesn’t want to be an ‘old’ Gael any more than a ‘new’ one. The in-group, emic perspective that Graeme (as a new speaker) provides on the social meaning of the phrase ‘new Gael’ reveals an altogether different pragmatic dimension to the term’s meaning than that described by Iseabail in extract 1, above. The social significance of the Gaelic language to the four new speakers’ identities, rather than being founded in (re)formulations of traditional speaker community membership, seems rather to be bound closely to their linguistic practice, and use of Gaelic in their day-to-day lives. In particular, their professional lives emerge as a key domain for new speakers’ Gaelic use and identity in the interviews.

New speakers: Domains of use?

Each of the four new speakers work within environments in which their Gaelic language skills are a vital aspect of their employment, and each consequently use a considerable amount of Gaelic in their day-to-day lives. The extent of the new speakers’ Gaelic language use varied to some degree, but each expressed a sense of appreciation for the opportunity to maintain their Gaelic language skills because of employment opportunities, in a way that

was not generally true of native speakers working in Gaelic. Euan, who often works through the medium of Gaelic in his job in the media, explains this sense of appreciation in the following extract:

EXTRACT 1.3

- Euan:** [T]ha mi gu math taingeil 'sgàth 's gu bheil an obair còrdadh rium-
cuideachd gun teagamh sam bith a bhith ag obair ann an Gàidhlig
*I'm quite grateful because I enjoy the work- and also absolutely to
be working in Gaelic*
- SD:** Seadh
Yeah
- Euan:** Tha mi a' faireachdainn caran nas làidire na bha mi mu dheidhinn- gu
bheil cothrom agam a bhith ag obair [sa Ghàidhlig]
*I feel quite a bit more strongly about it than I did in the past- that I
have an opportunity to work [in Gaelic]*

Euan's statement here that he feels 'more strongly' grateful for the opportunity to work in Gaelic than he used to touches on the issue of diachronic change in (bilingual) speakers' linguistic practices and perceptions (see Pujolar and González, 2013; also Carty, this volume). Similarly, in the following extract, Ceit, who currently works with children in the Gaelic arts, discusses the relative proportion of Gaelic she uses currently. Again touching on the issue of diachronic change in bilingual speakers' language practices, she states initially that her Gaelic use 'goes up and down':

EXTRACT 1.4

- SD:** 'S anns an fharsaingeachd (.) eh dè cho tric 's a bhios tu a' cleachdadh na
Gàidhlig?
So generally (.) uh how often do you use Gaelic?
- Ceit:** Tha e dol suas is sìos um:: [...] Bha mi ag obair ann an Gàidhlig- bha mi
ann an Ulapul ann an (.) em 's e **November** tha mi a' smaoineachadh a bh'
ann [...] an-dràsta chanainn gu bheil mi ag obair ann an Gàidhlig gu
math tric em (.) le clann=
*It goes up and down um: [...] I was working in Gaelic when I was
in Ullapool in (.) em it was **November** I think [...] at the moment
I'd say I work in Gaelic quite often (.) with children*
- SD:** =Mhm
- Ceit:** ann an Gàidhlig **so** is dòcha (.) càirteil dhe mo bheatha an-dràsta
*in Gaelic **so** perhaps (.) for a quarter of my life at the
moment*

Although use of Gaelic for around a quarter of one's life at present may appear to be some distance removed from the conceptual ideal of the 'balanced' bilingual speaker, a 25 per cent overall rate of usage may in fact represent a kind of 'best possible' for a minoritised language like Gaelic in Scotland, especially outside of its 'heartland' areas in the Western Isles, and for speakers whose partner and family cannot understand the language. This was certainly the case for Ceit, whose present use of Gaelic is constrained chiefly to the professional sphere, since her partner cannot speak the language. By contrast, Alasdair explains in the following extract that whilst his wife *can* speak Gaelic, the couple rarely speak Gaelic to each other at home, in spite of the fact that they clearly have the option to do so:

EXTRACT 1.5

SD: A bheil Gàidhlig aig do bhean?
Can your wife speak Gaelic?

Alasdair: Tha **yeah** tha
Yes yeah yes

SD: Uh huh 's am bi sibh cleachdadh na Gàidhlig aig an taigh mar sin?
so do you speak Gaelic at home then?

Alasdair: Cha bhi (.) 's e seo- **no** seo fìor (.) airson adhbhar air choireigin cha bhi sinn a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig ro thrì [...]. Tha sinn a' bruidhinn ma dhèidhinn bho àm gu àm air carson ach chan eil- cha do dh'aontaich sinn fhathast air carson
No (.) that's- no that's true (.) for some reason we don't speak Gaelic very often [...] we talk about why we don't from time to time but we don't- we haven't agreed why yet

Alasdair reports his use of Gaelic with his wife to be limited within the home environment, elaborating that although they have discussed the possible reasons for this, they have not yet reached agreement on why it is the case. Limited Gaelic use in the home-community context was a common finding throughout the interview corpus, and was by no means limited to informants without the opportunity to use the language in their professional lives. Indeed, many of the 46 interviewees stated they had more important priorities than seeking out opportunities to speak Gaelic at the present time. Although all four new speakers discussed here report working through the medium of Gaelic, that fact remains, for these four at least, that this does not necessarily correlate with making substantial use of the language in their social lives. Whilst the language appears to constitute an important aspect of their day-to-day lives, Gaelic seems to be valued principally for professional

interactional purposes (see McEwan-Fujita, 2008), rather than for social identification, or cultural integration. We may return, therefore, to the overarching question of Gaelic identity, to new speakers' apparent lack of association with the label '(new) Gael', and, as I hope to demonstrate, their self-identification in rather different terms.

New speakers of Gaelic: (New) Gaels?

In extract 2 (above), Graeme described his sense of discomfort in relation to the term 'new Gael', especially when applied to new speakers (such as himself) by other groups of speakers. Elsewhere in the interview corpus, a similar sense of discomfort was frequently related by interviewees with regard to the term 'Gael' more generally, and in the cases both of the new speakers and informants who use the language only rarely, a sense of identification with this term was often rejected outright. Whilst Euan described in extract 3 (above) his sense of gratitude for the opportunity to work through the medium of Gaelic in his professional life, his explanation in the following extract of his own (national) identity – and his reaction to my prompt regarding the term Gael – provide a clear account of his lack of association with that label:

EXTRACT 1.6

- Euan:** [T]ha mis' gam fhaicinn fhìn mar Albannach gun teagamh (.) dìreach- tha an teaghlach agam ann an sheo- sin far a bheil an (.) an dachaigh againn
I certainly see myself as Scottish (.) just- my family is here- that's where our (.) our home is [...]
- SD:** Dìreach (.) an e Gàidheal a th' annad cuideachd mar sin?
Exactly (.) are you a Gael as well then?
- Euan:** ((laughs)) Chan e uill ((laughing)) cha chanainns' gur e Gàidheal a th' annam idir **no** (.) 's e Gall a th' annam [...] a tha air tionndadh mar gum biodh ((laughs)) em **yeah** bidh mise an-còmhnaidh ag ràdh gur ann à Dùn Èideann a tha mi
((laughs)) No well ((laughing)) I wouldn't say I am a Gael at all no (.) I'm a Lowlander [...] who has "turned" as it were ((laughs)) em yeah I always say I'm from Edinburgh

Euan's description of his Scottish identity in unproblematic terms – as the place where his family lives and where their home is – reflects a widespread sentiment throughout the dataset. Overwhelmingly, interview and questionnaire informants self-identified as Scottish, reflecting an association with a civic national identity that they perceive as banal but inclusive. When I ask Euan if he is a Gael as well as a Scot, his response is one of

surprise and amusement. He laughs at the suggestion, and even uses the oppositional (and, in Fishmanite terms, ‘Yian’) Gaelic designation ‘*Gall*’ (‘foreigner; Lowlander’) to explain his lack of affinity with the traditional (‘Xian’) identity category ‘Gael’. The limited currency and attractiveness of this traditionally defined identity is reflected right across the sample of Gaelic-medium educated adults I surveyed. Taken as a whole, the vast majority of the 46 adults I interviewed described their cultural identities in terms, principally, of their self-identification as Scots. Although a small number of native Gaelic speakers did regard themselves positively as Gaels, most interviewees viewed the term with ambivalence, sometimes verging on open hostility. Further research on this threshold question would be instructive within the context of Gaelic revitalisation in Scotland, as well as that in Ireland and Canada. Possible reasons for this explicit rejection of the term ‘Gael’ are suggested by Alasdair in the following extract:

EXTRACT 1.7

- Alasdair:** [A]nns an obair seo /tha/ mise (.) ann an dòigh (2.0) **you know** an ginealach ùr
In this job I'm (.) in a way (2.0) you know the next generation [of Gaelic]
- SD:** hmm
- Alasdair:** Ged nach eil mise a' smaoinichadh orm mar Ghàidheal airson /tha seòrsa **stigma attached** a tha mise faicinn
Although I don't think of myself as a Gael because there's a kind of stigma attached that I see
- SD:** Tha
Yeah
- Alasdair:** **Identity** 's chan eil mi airson a bhith a' dol a-staigh dhan a' chòmhradh a tha sin idir [...] **I mean** aig deireadh an latha chan e **evangelist** a th' annam-sa anns a' Ghàidhlig [...] cha do smaoinich mi riamh gum bi mi nam oifigear na Gàidhlig agus ma bhruidhinneas tu ris na tidsearan a bh' agam chanadh iad an aon rud [...] **so** a thaobh fèin aithneachadh/ tha mise smaoinichadh- chan e Gàidheal a th' annam idir idir
An identity and I don't want to get into that discussion at all [...] I mean at the end of the day I'm not a Gaelic evangelist [...] I never thought I'd be a Gaelic officer and if you speak to the teachers I had they'll say the same thing [...] so in terms of identity I think- I'm not a Gael at all

Whilst reflecting that in his current job role (as a Gaelic officer at a local authority) he is part of a new generation (‘*ginealach ùr*’) of Gaelic speakers, Alasdair states in no uncertain terms his lack of identity as a Gael, because, in his own words, of the ‘stigma attached’ to

that label. He neglects to elaborate here, stating that he does not ‘want to get into that discussion at all’; I suggest that this reluctance may indicate negative affect surrounding his and other new speakers’ perceptions of this ‘stigma’, and their subsequent rejection of the identity. Alasdair states that he is not an ‘evangelist’ in Gaelic, and reflects that as a school pupil he would never have imagined being a Gaelic officer in the future – and that his teachers in GME would have been similarly surprised! In terms of his identity, he claims that he is not a Gael ‘at all’.

Discussion: Gaels and ‘Xians’ in 21st century Scotland

The foregoing analysis has sought to demonstrate how the unproblematic linkage envisaged between language and ethnolinguistic identity in Fishman’s (1991, 2001b, 2013) RLS model fails to mobilise in the case of new Gaelic speakers who graduated from GME programmes in Scotland. The traditional ‘Xian’ ethnolinguistic speaker community indexed by the term ‘Gael(s)’ seems not to be one with which the four new speakers discussed here readily associate, or with which they would wish to integrate in the future. More generally, the evidence I have discussed here tends to corroborate the view, outlined above, that essentialist conceptions envisaging a straightforward relationship between language and ethnolinguistic identity fail to adequately describe the experiences of new speakers of minority languages.³

The feasibility of positing a straightforward relationship between the minority language and its traditional speaker community as a basis for language revitalisation in late modernity has been repeatedly questioned by authors such as Jaffe (1999, 2007a, b), Edwards (2009, 2010a, 2013), and Duchêne and Heller (2007, 2012). New Gaelic speakers’ apparent lack of identity as (new) Gaels need not be viewed as problematic in its own right; if their principal identification with and use of the Gaelic language derives from their professional (and educational) lives, it is clear no such identity should be expected to develop. Yet without a strong social identity in the language outside of the professional sphere, it would similarly seem naive to expect such speakers to take the language forward as a vital aspect of their domestic and family lives, and to transmit it to children in the home-community context in future.

Whilst on the one hand, the four new speakers discussed above may be considered to be ‘outliers’ from the general pattern of relative Gaelic disuse among my sample of adults who received GME, and whose experiences may constitute relative success stories in terms of the role of GME in current language policy, two important issues must be recognised by policy-makers with this in mind. If the professional sphere is the domain most likely to form the basis of new speakers’ use of and association with the language after their GME schooling is completed, Gaelic employment opportunities for post-GME new speakers would need to be greatly expanded, in order to ensure the continuity of pupils’ Gaelic language proficiencies after school. On the other hand, if it is hoped that such new speakers will progress to using the language in the home-community sphere and develop a strong identity in the language, additional attention and resources should be focused on that specific objective. As a response to this challenge, children currently in GME schools and classes should clearly be encouraged to speak and socialise in the language outside of the formal domain of education as much as possible, to understand the importance of the Gaelic language to their (keenly felt) civic identities as Scots, and to more fully appreciate its place in a modern, multicultural Scotland (see Dunmore, 2016).

Conclusions

Issues of bilingual development, minority language use and social identity are clearly central to much research that has already been produced on the phenomenon of new speakers of minority languages. The question of linguistic continuity after bilingual education, however, has not previously been adequately addressed in any single context internationally. The findings presented in this chapter are perhaps suggestive of new speakers’ cultural identifications with Gaelic, although it should be noted that they are by no means exhaustive, drawing as they do on a small subset of informants. Whilst new speakers constitute a marked minority among the sample of informants I interviewed, their status as relative outliers from the overall sociolinguistic picture marks them out as deserving of greater analytic focus, in order that we better understand the sociological and ideological factors that may differentiate them from the majority of GME-leavers.

Their rejection of the label ‘(new) Gael’ is significant inasmuch as it does *not* mark them out from the majority of informants who tend to make only limited use of Gaelic in

the present day. Neither do these four new speakers profess a sense of linguistic identity as ‘new speakers’ of Gaelic *per se*, a finding also recently replicated in a wider study of new Gaelic speaker trajectories and motivations in Scotland (McLeod et al. 2014). As noted above, these new Gaelic speakers’ lack of identification as (new) Gaels is not problematic for language policy objectives as such. As this preliminary analysis has demonstrated, however, their functional fluency in Gaelic and constant use of the language at work seems not to be accompanied by either a strong social identity in Gaelic, or by regular usage of the language with partners in the home domain. If, as contemporary policy statements suggest, these two objectives are indeed among the intended outcomes of GME, additional resources should be directed specifically at encouraging students’ development of the concomitant habitus in school and at home.

Key to transcription conventions

[[words]	overlapping speech
(.)	perceivable pause <1s duration
(2.0)	perceivable pause >1s duration
(word)	uncertain transcription
(x)	unintelligible
xxx	(place)name omitted
/word/	non-concordant morphosyntactic usage
((word))	analyst’s comments
[...]	material omitted
wo::	elongation
<u>word</u>	emphatic speech
word=	latched speech, no pause
words	codeswitch

Notes

1. Evidence from the international literature – and especially that concerning French immersion education in Canada – provides a mixed picture of target language use by past students after their completion of bilingual schooling. Johnstone’s (2001) comprehensive review of research on immersion education internationally found the extent of linguistic attrition after completion of immersion programmes to be widely variable. Harley’s (1994) meta-analysis of language practices among

former French immersion students in Canada shortly after they had graduated from high school found greater use of listening skills than of reading, speaking or writing, while MacFarlane and Wesche (1995) found low levels of French language use among former immersion students after high school.

2. In the interests of anonymity and data protection, pseudonyms are supplied for each of the interviewees in this article.
3. Indeed, it is far from clear that such a generalised conception of the relationship adequately describes the experiences of language users in any context.

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